

Message Text

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SUBJECT" THE FATHER'S FIELD" ABANDONED

REF: MOSCOW 11434

1. SUMMARY. A RELATIVELY CANDID ACCOUNT IN PRAVDA AUGUST 20 DISCUSSES WHY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LEAVING THE LAND AND HEADING FOR THE CITIES. THE EXPLANATION COMES THROUGH LOUD AND CLEAR IN SPITE OF LAPSES INTO OFFICIAL OPTIMISM. LIFE ON THE FARM IS UNBEARABLE. END SUMMARY.

2. "THE FATHER'S FIELD" IN PRAVDA AUGUST 20 CONTAINS A RELATIVELY CANDID DISCUSSION OF WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A CONTINUING MASS EXODUS OF RURAL YOUNG PEOPLE INTO THE BIG CITIES. FOCUSING ON THE SITUATION IN BASHKIRIYA AND ORENBURG OBLAST, PRAVDA'S CORRESPONDENTS (A. PETRUSHOV AND V. SHALGUNOV) BEGIN BY ACCENTUATING THE POSITIVE, NOTING THAT THIS AREA IS BRINGING IN THE CURRENT HARVEST SUCCESSFULLY AND THAT A NUMBER OF ITS AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED

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MEASURES FOR "FIXING" (ZAKREPLENIYE) AGRICULTURAL CADRES

IN PLACE AND THEREFORE HAVE NO SHORTAGE OF LABOR.

3. BUT ("ODNAKO") ELSEWHERE THE SITUATION IS DESCRIBED AS BAD AND GETTING WORSE. SOME "OBJECTIVE" REASONS ARE CITED BY THE AUTHORS: YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVE FOR MILITARY SERVICE, TO ENTER HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, TO TRAVEL TO DISTANT HIGH PRIORITY CONSTRUCTION SITES. OTHERS, HOWEVER, LEAVE THE VILLAGE WITHOUT VALID REASONS. THE AUTHORITIES WERE SUFFICIENTLY INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHY TO TAKE THE UNUSUAL STEP OF DISTRIBUTING AMONG RECENT GRADUATES OF RURAL SCHOOLS QUESTIONNAIRES PREPARED BY THE SECTION FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH OF THE BASHKIR AFFILIATE OF THE USSR ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.

4. THE FINDINGS: COMPLAINTS ABOUT LOW PAY, HARD WORK, POOR PROSPECTS, LACK OF AMENITIES AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES. "THE CITY OFFERS HIGHER PAY AND MORE ATTRACTIVE CONDITIONS." THE AUTHORS NOTE THAT "TALKS WITH AGRICULTURAL WORKERS SHOW THAT THE PROBLEM OF FIXING CADRES IN THE VILLAGE IS NOT YET SOLVED;" IT CONTINUES TO BE "WIDELY DISCUSSED IN PARTY COMMITTEES."

5. POSSIBLE SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS INCLUDE BETTER TRAINING FOR FUTURE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS; BETTER INCENTIVES AND SALARY SCHEDULES; THE NEED TO INCULCATE THE YOUTH WITH A LOVE FOR THE LAND AND THE PROFESSION OF THEIR FATHERS; ASSIGNING OLDER "MENTORS" TO NEW AGRICULTURAL WORKERS TO PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT, ADVICE, AND SUPERVISION; AND MAKING BETTER USE OF WOMEN IN SPECIALIZED AND MECHANIZED FARM OPERATIONS. THE ARTICLE ENDS, AS IT BEGAN, ON AN UPBEAT--ALBEIT UNCONVINCING--NOTE: "WHATEVER SKEPTICS MAY SAY, THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF AGRICULTURAL WORK IS GROWING."

6. COMMENT: WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REFTEL) ACCOUNTS WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE FLIGHT OF THE RURAL POPULATION FROM THE LAND, OF ABANDONED VILLAGES WHERE ONLY A FEW OLD WOMEN ARE LEFT. THE SITUATION DESCRIBED IN GUARDED LANGUAGE IN THE PRESENT ARTICLE SUGGESTS CONTINUING DISINTEGRATION OF THE TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN AGRICULTURAL WAY OF LIFE AFTER DECADES OF COMMUNIST MISMANAGEMENT. MOST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STRIKING IS THE REPEATED REFERENCE TO THE NEED FOR "ZAKREPLENIYE" OF FARM LABOR IN PLACE. THIS WORD HAS THE SAME ROOT DERIVATION, AND FLAVOR, AS "KREPOSTNOYE PRAVO", I.E., SERFDOM. IN FACT, ONE READS BETWEEN THE LINES A POSITIVE NOSTALGIA FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS, WHEN SERFS WERE SERFS AND THERE WAS NO NONSENSE ABOUT LEAVING THE LAND. NOR IS THERE ANY DISCUSSION OF THE EFFECT THAT THE DECISION TO ISSUE (FOR THE FIRST TIME) PASSPORTS TO

THE RURAL POPULATION MAY HAVE HAD IN ACCELERATING THE
FLIGHT FROM THE LAND--A DECISION THE AUTHORITIES MAY NOW
BE REGRETTING AS AN INEXCUSEABLE LAPSE INTO LIBERALISM.
THE FACT THAT THE SUBJECT WAS CONSIDERED SERIOUS ENOUGH
TO BE DISCUSSED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF PRAVDA, DURING THE
HARVEST SEASON, UNDERLINES THE CONCERN WITH WHICH IT IS
BEING VIEWED IN MOSCOW.
STOESSEL

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